

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CALLED¹

KEEP OBJECTIVES FOREMOST

Conversion or Clear Communication?

Before entering into our main topic, I would like to make three introductory remarks, the first of which is that we have to keep in mind that our primary objective in *da‘wah* is not to convert the individual whom we are inviting. Conversion is in the hands of Almighty Allaah. He said in the Qur’aan:

á ÇİİÊ Œ ĩ%Fg0289 Bmæ qêr 42± 9 ` B " %JkP \$EÅ9r M6ôk ÒB " %j5 W y7 Rj â

“Indeed you cannot guide whom you love, but Allah guides whom He wills.”

(*Soorah al-Qasas*, 28: 56)

Our job is the same one that was given to all the prophets and messengers, and given to the Prophet Muhammad (...). It is to convey the message clearly, as Allaah said:

á ÇİĖ Ú üŦB\$à»70\$ŷ) ÁqT9\$' Bã \$Br â

“The only obligation on the messenger is to give the clear message.”

(Soorah an-Noor, 24: 54)

Therefore, we have to constantly remind ourselves whenever we are in a discussion with an individual or giving a lecture to a group, that we are not there to win the argument or the debate. Our goal is to make sure they properly understand the true message of Islaam in its pristine purity. It may be impossible to convince them in an hour or a day to change the course of their whole life, but at least they should understand the reality of what you are calling to, the Oneness of Allaah, the finality of Muhammad's (...) prophethood, the certainty of the Day of Judgment, etc. Therefore, what is most important regarding those being called to Islaam is that the message should be crystal clear.

Listen Before You Speak

The second point is that we should strive to listen before we speak, to understand the other party and the other side, before we explain our points of view. If we care about the person that we are giving *da'wah* to and if we care whether they receive this message or not, then we should take care to listen to them. Many times when we are in a *da'wah* situation, we are more interested in getting our point of view across than in hearing their opinions. Either because we have already heard their arguments before, and or we know their opinions are wrong anyway, so what is the point in listening to them? “Jesus is not the son of God because of reasons one, two, three, four, and five. Furthermore, the Bible says this and the Qur’aan says that, and this Christian scholar said this and Paul said that, etc., etc.” But the person you are telling that may not be interested in it because he does not believe that Jesus is literally the son of God, or he or she may be interested in some other issue. They may have some confusion about formal prayers in Islaam, why Muslims have to pray five times a day? So, we should take some time out and listen to

¹ This chapter was delivered as a lecture by Ubayd Qadhi and edited by Dr Bilal Philips.

the person before we begin our discussion, and allow further time during the discussion listen to them.

Put Yourself in the Other Person's Shoes

The third and final point is to put ourselves in their shoes. After discussions, people generally do not remember what was actually said, the particular words that were used, the precise issues which were discussed, but how it was said, the way the words were used and the issues presented. They do not really remember what we say, yet we spend so much time bringing points and explaining proofs, because this is the style we have developed in learning Islaam. Consequently, we want to use texts from the Qur'aan and hadeeth to prove our points. However, if we stop and think for a moment, we know that most of the non-Muslims whom we give *da'wah* to do not understand this style of speaking. They do not understand, "Allaah said," "The Messenger (...) said," "The Companions said," "Shaykh so and so said," etc." They do not understand this type of terminology, nor its significance. So, we should put ourselves in their shoes and be gentle with them. We should try to be conscious of the impression we are giving them.

Let us try our level best to keep these three critical points in the back of our minds whenever we are in a discussion with somebody else.

READING THE SITUATION

When you find yourself in a situation, you have to read that situation in a way similar to the way you read a book. When you enter a room and find yourself in front of a group of people, or you go to a shopping center and you see somebody interested in Islaam, you have to read that situation carefully before making any statements. Meaning, you have to be conscious of the unique elements of the situation and tailor your approach accordingly. We must be conscious of two main things: first the environment, and second the actual individual.

Timing

When it comes to the environment, the first thing to be remembered is the timing, finding the appropriate time. Is it a suitable time to talk about this subject or not? The Prophet (...) used to select certain times to give his lectures. On one occasion one of 'Abdullaah ibn Mas'ood's students came to him and said: "We love your lectures and sermons. Please give us more!" as he only used to give one lecture a week. He replied: "I wish that I could give more. The only thing that prevents me is the *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad (...). He used to take care of us in giving sermons by selecting a suitable time, so that we would not become bored."² From this incident we can see that the Messenger (...) knew the characteristics of the called better than they knew themselves. People, in their enthusiasm and excitement, usually want more lectures in the beginning of any new

² *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, vol. 1, no. 68. Ibn 'Abbaas also said, "Lecture the people once per week, if you must, then twice, and if you must be frequent then thrice. But, do not make the people bored of this Qur'aan. Do not let me catch you going to people when they are in conversation, and you relate some story to them, cut their conversation and make them bored. Instead be silent and if they request that you speak to them, talk to them while they desire it. And beware of rhyming supplications and avoid them, for I was used to the Prophet () and his companions not doing that." (*Fat'h al-Baaree*, vol. 11, no. 6337, p. 151 [Kitaab ad-Da'awaat, Baab: Maa Yukrahu minas-Saja').

program. However, the reality is that if you give too much or you speak for too long, they will eventually become bored. It is the nature of human beings to become lazy with time. Thus, the common saying “Familiarity breeds contempt.” Yes, there will be a few who are keen and will remain enthusiastic due to their sincerity and high level of commitment. However, in such cases, we have to consider the norm and not the exceptions. Consequently, we have to consider our timing. We must ask ourselves, “Is this the right time? Am I giving them too much?” In another *hadeeth*, the Prophet (...) said, “Among the signs of an individual’s understanding of his religion is the length of his prayer and the shortness of his speech.” Therefore, we have to think about the length of our discussion, to insure that it is not too long, and we also have to think about the time we wish to engage in discussion, to insure that it is not at an inappropriate time. So read the environment, look around you. If you are in a busy market place, is it a suitable time to talk about the reality death, will you get your point across concerning punishment of the grave when everything around him is reminding him of the material world? Perhaps another topic would be more appropriate, or if you need to talk about reality, then take him alone in a room and have that discussion.

Audience

The second principle governing the environment is the audience. We have to read the audience as we read the circumstances and the situations. Are we talking to a group or an individual? There is a difference. Remember that when you are in a group of people you cannot convince them. Look at the example of *as’haabul qaryah* (People of the Village), mentioned in *Soorah Yaaseen*. Allaah, Most High, sent a messenger to the village, and village people rejected him. Then he sent another messenger, and they also rejected him. The scholars of *Tafseer* say that they imprisoned them and tortured them. So, Allaah sent a third messenger to support them against this group, but still they would not listen. Later, Almighty Allaah said:

أَفَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ آيَاتٌ أَنْ يَقُولُوا رَبِّي جَاءَنِي بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ مِنْ رَبِّي ۚ

“A man came running from the farthest corner of the village, [saying], ‘O my people follow the messengers!’ ” (*Soorah Yaaseen*, 36: 20)

فَتَّبِعُوا الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ أَجْرًا مِنْ يٰۤاٰلِهٰٓيْكُمْ وَلَا يَسْتَسْأَلُونَ فِتْرًا مِنْكُمْ

“Follow those who do not ask any reward from you, and they are rightly guided.”
(36: 21)

وَمَا لِيْ لَا أَعْبُدُ الَّذِيْ فَطَرَنِيْ ۚ إِنَّ أَعْيُنَنَا عَمٰٓةً ۖ وَهِيَ لَا تَرٰٓى شَيْۤآءً ۚ

“And what is wrong with me that I do not worship the One who created me and to Him I return.” (36: 22)

The story continues, with another person from the village who accepted the message trying to convince the villagers. Although he used logic and emotion to convince them, they remain unconvinced because they were a group. The scholars say that he was killed and he has his reward with Allaah Almighty.

أَقِيلُ لَكُمْ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّي مَا كُنْتُ تَبْصُرُ مِنْ دُونِ الْحَبْلِ وَأَنَا مِنَ الْمُنْذَرِينَ

“He said: ‘If only my people knew that my Lord has forgiven me and put me among the honored.’” (36: 26-7)

The point here is that there is a difference when you are talking to a group and when you’re talking to an individual. This is why Allaah Most High advises humankind:

أَقِيلُ لَكُمْ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّي مَا كُنْتُ تَبْصُرُ مِنْ دُونِ الْحَبْلِ وَأَنَا مِنَ الْمُنْذَرِينَ

“I advise you with one thing to stand before Allah alone or in pairs and reflect.”

(Soorah Saba, 34: 46)

If you really want to convince someone about something, you need to talk to them one on one or maybe two. Once I went to a church, and I began addressing my audience about *Tawhheed* and the realities of *Laa ilaaha illallaah*. After the talk, I realized from their questions that they were not interested in *Tawhheed*. No one asked any questions about *Tawhheed*, instead all their questions focused on what Islaam had to say about homosexuality. And in the course of their questions I came to realize that I was in a homosexual church and the members of my audience were mostly homosexuals and lesbians. Consequently, the time was not appropriate for the subject of my lecture. I was giving them the message of *Tawhheed* and they were interested in what Islaam says about homosexuality. However, once I have read the audience and found myself in a group of homosexuals, do I tell them that the punishment for homosexuality is death, or should I inform them that they are to be thrown off the highest mountain? No. This is neither the appropriate time nor the suitable circumstance. They are in a group, so it is likely that they will not listen properly. Instead, I gave them a general answer, and after the talk and the answer session, I went to them and talked to them individually about purity, about relations with a wife, and about the blessings of having a wife, or a spouse, etc. As individuals they listened for another hour, but as a group they just wanted a quick answer then they left. So we have to carefully read the situation and determine if our topic is suitable for a group of people or if it is more appropriate for individuals.

Location

The third thing is to look at is your location. For example, Mount Safaa in the time of the Prophet (...) was used for announcements. So the Prophet (...) went there to make his point. He chose that particular location because he knew the people he was inviting to Islaam. He knew their nature and characteristics, so he chose Mount Safaa. He climbed up to its summit and addressed his people saying: “O people of Quraysh, if I were to tell you there was an army behind this hill would you listen to me?” He used his location to make his point.

As one calling to Islaam must choose the most suitable time to address a given audience, he or she must also choose the most suitable location. The location may be a public hall, a university auditorium, a school classroom, a mosque, an Islamic center’s hall, etc., or it may be a restaurant, a coffee shop, a park, the beach, out on the desert, etc. One must choose the appropriate location for the type of message one intends to deliver. What may be said over lunch in a restaurant may not be suitable for a university auditorium and vice versa.

INDIVIDUAL

Demographics

Almighty Allaah said:

أَمْ أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ دُونِهِ رَسُولًا وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ هَذَا لَتَكْذَابٌ

“I did not send any messenger except that he spoke the language of his people to explain to them.” (*Soorah Ibraaheem*, 14: 4)

There is great wisdom in this principle. In general, the best person to talk to people is one who shares a similar background with them. I, as an American, understand the American society and culture in general, but, because I am descended from Indo-Pakistani emigrants to America, I know that I have limitations in addressing certain American audiences. It is better to get a reverted or converted Muslim from America to go give certain talks. Similarly, here in Qatar there is a wide mixture of people. Although it is good to give *da‘wah* to any and everybody, we should know our limitations. At times, some people would only feel comfortable to listen to certain things from somebody of the same background. Someone from Philippines or one who has visited Philippines and has intimate knowledge of their culture can make their talks more effective and relevant to a Filipino audience by giving local examples. Similarly, someone from England, or from Germany, etc. will likely have a greater impact on Brits and Germans, respectively. Their impact may be far greater than a very knowledgeable foreigner.

There are three elements that we must keep in mind when giving *da‘wah*: Islaamic knowledge of the Qur’aan and the Sunnah is one element you may use to talk to somebody. However, a great scholar quoting Allaah and His Messenger (...) not touch the heart of the person being called. Besides knowledge, one needs a degree of eloquence. Evidences and proofs are important, but for them to reach the audience, you need to have a good speaking manner. Even if you can quote the whole of *Saheeh al-Bukhaaree*, you still may not reach that person unless you can speak to them in an eloquent manner. The Prophet (...) was given *jawaami‘ul-kalim* (concise effective speech), to convey his message. However, even that is not enough, you also need to build relationships and that is where it becomes important to get someone from the same background as the person being called. To build a relationship with somebody, you have to have some common background. Perhaps you do not come from the same culture, but you speak their language or you work in the same profession. Wisdom becomes manifest when you are able to link your knowledge to eloquence in speech and your ability to build relationships. That is true wisdom.

Education

The second point concerning an individual that must be considered is their level of education and understanding. Talking to somebody who is a university graduate is different from talking to someone who is a common laborer. One may quote many things to a university graduate which the average laborer would not normally understand. Complicated ideas and philosophical concepts like the trinity, and discrepancies in Bible manuscripts are not suitable for discussion with people of limited education. A perfect example of that is Thul-Qarnayn mentioned in *Soorah al-Kahf*. Thul-Qarnayn went to three groups of people. One group of people who were a strong nation, according to the

scholars, he conquered and made very clear statements regarding them. He said: “I will punish whoever does wrong and is unjust, and I will give a reward to whoever believes in and does righteous deeds.” He talked to them in a precise law-giving manner, because they were a civilized nation, and a strong community. But when he went to the other side of the world, he met a group of people who couldn’t understand what Thul-Qarnayn was saying, and he could barely understand what they were saying; a completely different group of people. Did Thul-Qarnayn tell them to either believe or suffer punishment? No. He saw that these people were a mild people. Some scholars said that they were lazy, because they were not able to build a wall to prevent the Gog and Magog and they had to ask Thul-Qarnayn to do it. Perhaps they were a materialistic people as they offered Thul-Qarnayn money. Or perhaps, they were ignorant of advanced methods of construction and were not educated in the ways of great civilizations. They were used to paying other people to do jobs for them. So what did Thul-Qarnayn do with them? He told them that he did not want their money. Instead, he instructed them to help him do the job. This was not because he needed their help as he had an army with him, but because he wanted to educate them about hard work. He wanted to teach them about what it means to take matters into your own hands, to defend yourselves. So he dealt with them in a different manner than he dealt with the first nation. Consequently, you have to look at the level of education and understanding of the people you’re talking to and deal with them accordingly.

Misconceptions

The third issue we have to look at is preconceived ideas and misconceptions those being called to Islaam may have. Of course, that can only be determined if we allow them to express their thoughts, if we listen first, before trying to teach them. Once we have heard a misconception, we have to decide whether to spend a lot of time trying to correct the misconception or to choose another tactic, or another topic. For example, raising the sun from the west. This is in reference to the story of Prophet Abraham when he went to the king and said:

أَمْ لِي مُلْكٌ مِّمَّا يَكْفُرُ بِهِ الْإِنْسَانُ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ

“My Lord is the One who gives life and causes death.” And the king said:

أَمْ أَنَا بَرٌّ

“I can give life and cause death.” Obviously the king had a misunderstanding about the meaning of giving life and causing death, a misconception. What did Abraham do? Did he spend time trying to explain to the king the correct meaning? No. Instead he chose another way. He challenged him saying,

وَأْتِ بِكَرْسِيِّكَ فَنَذِرُكَ أَفْعَالُ الْغَايَةِ

أَمْ لِي مُلْكٌ مِّمَّا يَكْفُرُ بِهِ الْإِنْسَانُ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ

“Indeed Allaah brings the sun from the east. Raise the sun from the west,’ and the disbeliever was dumfounded.” (Soorah al-Baqarah, 2: 258)

He was stupefied and completely unable to respond. Similarly, rather than stopping to explain each and every time a misconception is raised, and becoming so bogged down in defensive explanations, the situation may be avoided by raising issues which clearly demonstrate Islaam's superiority. For example, when misconceptions concerning polygamy in Islaam are raised, those raising them may be asked if monogamy is actually being practiced in the so-called monogamous countries of the West, or if one wife and innumerable girl-friends, mistresses, etc. can realistically be called monogamy. Furthermore, it may be noted that Islaam is the only religion whose scriptures explicitly say to marry only one wife.

أَمْ يُرِيدُونَ كَيْدًا

“And if you fear you will not be just, then marry only one.” (*Soorah an-Nisaa*, 4: 3)

That statement often stupefies the detractors as neither the Bible, Torah, Gospel, nor the Hindu Scriptures (Vedas, Upanishads, Gita, etc.) contain such a statement. Instead, their scriptures encourage unrestricted polygamy. On such occasions it is important to read the circumstances accurately, to see where the discussion is going. Whether it is a case of honest misunderstandings which need to be cleared, or deliberate misconceptions being thrown out to disable the caller.

CHOOSING YOUR APPROACH

Choice of Subject

Next we have to choose our approach. After reading the situation carefully and correctly, you must now choose the subject. What are you going to talk about? Prophet Muhammad (...) told Mu'aath ibn Jabal, “You are coming to a people from *Ahl al-Kitaab*, so the first thing you should invite them to is *Tawheed*.” Notice the logic. You are coming to some People of the Scripture; therefore choose to talk to them about *Tawheed*. When you know the people, the situation and the circumstance, now you choose your topic.

There was a time some years back when enthusiastic Muslims used to continuously engage Christians in discussions concerning the Gospel of Barnabus. The origin and history of the Gospel of Barnabus is a long story. It is enough to note that there is mention in it that Prophet Jesus was not crucified, and that a prophet would come after him by the name of Ahmad. Consequently, Muslims spent a lot of time trying to convince Christians about the authenticity of the Gospel of Barnabus. Was that really important? If they believed in the Gospel of Barnabus, would it save them on the Day of Judgment? No. Is everything mentioned in the Gospel of Barnabus the Gospel truth? No. In fact there are passages and concepts contained in it which are incorrect and go against Islaamic teachings. Consequently, we must choose our topics wisely. We should ask ourselves: “What does this person really need to know to fulfill my obligation of conveying the clear message of Islaam to them? What do I have to give this person so that on the Day of Judgment I can say to Allaah: ‘O Allaah! I conveyed Your message,’? The message which I have to give them is none other than *Tawheed*. We may begin our discussions by talking about the trinity, but many Christians do not believe in the trinity. Some believe that there is only one God and that Jesus Christ was a prophet of God. In such cases, there is no need to go into a long debate about the trinity, since they have already rejected it. Consequently, we have to find out what their actual beliefs are and not preach to them based on assumptions. We have to take some time out to listen, as was

mentioned earlier. If we do so, we may find that it would be more beneficial to talk about Prophet Muhammad (...). Thus, the choice of topic to discuss or share is as important as reading the situation correctly.

Method of Delivery

The next thing which we need to keep in mind when approaching others is our method of delivery. We have to decide how we are going to communicate our message. Are we going to use an emotion approach? Although, emotional arguments are to be avoided in general because they tend to cloud the issues and the facts, sometimes they are the best method. On one occasion, the Prophet (...) gave a sermon in which his eyes became red, voice became loud and his anger increased.³ However, that may be appropriate in a Friday Sermon, because people are there in the Mosque for a particular religious reason. It is also important for motivating people for Jihaad, or for giving in charity, etc. At other times logic may be most appropriate. One of the Companions by the name of Mu'aawiyah ibn al-Hakam, mentioned that he came to see Prophet Muhammad (...) after converting to Islaam, and he found him making his prayers, so he joined the prayers. When one of those praying behind the Prophet sneezed, so he said, "Yarhamukallaah [May Allaah have mercy on you]," while praying. The other Companions turned and stared at him in the prayer and he asked, "What are you all staring at?" So they started hitting their thighs to make him quiet. When the Prophet finished his prayer he simply said:

((إِنَّ هَذِهِ الصَّلَاةَ لَا يَصْلَحُ فِيهَا شَيْءٌ مِنْ كَلَامِ النَّاسِ))

*"Indeed, the speech of people is not suitable for this prayer."*⁴

He gave Mu'aawiyah a simple logical reason for not talking during formal prayers, as opposed to raising his voice and screaming at him for his error.

Where possible, visual aids should be employed in conveying the message as it helps get the message across. People today are very much visually oriented. TV, video, computer, CD, DVD, etc., etc. have become the most popular media for communication. Consequently, using power point presentations, or charts and over head projectors are great aids in conveying the message today's audiences. The Prophet (...) himself employed visual aids in teaching his companions. On one occasion he prayed on top of the *mimbar* (pulpit) and then informed his companions that he only did so for them to learn his method of prayer.⁵ On another occasion he drew a straight line in the dirt and other lines branching off from either side to demonstrate the significance of his straight path and the abundance of deviant paths leading away from the true path. And on another occasion he said, "*The Last Hour and I have been sent like these two*," and he joined his forefinger and his middle finger,⁶ in order to indicate how close the Final Hour was.

Everyone likes to hear information relayed in the form of a story. The human mind seems to relax and be comfortable in the psychological environment created by narratives. Consequently, stories from the bards and storytellers of the past to the authors

³ *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 2, p. 410, no. 1885.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 271-2, no. 1094.

⁵ *Sahih Al Bukhari*, vol. 2, pp. 18-9, no. 40 and *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 1, pp. 274-5, no. 1111.

⁶ *Sahih Mus,im.*, vol. 2, p. 410, no. 1885.

of fiction of the present are held in high esteem by societies throughout the world. Oftentimes, social criticisms have found their widest audiences through the vehicle of the story. For example, in *David Copperfield*, Charles Dickens attacked the exploitation of children by Victorian society; likewise, in 1984, George Orwell commented on state interference in the lives of its citizens. The 90's movie, *Primary Colors*, taken from a book by Joe Klein, was a thinly disguised account of President Clinton's philandering while campaigning for office of the president.

Stories about people and civilizations of the past are especially interesting because they represent mysteries to the people of the present. Hence the Qur'aan and the Sunnah has, in a number of instances, employed the narrative (*qissah*) format in order to convey its message to human beings in a most intriguing manner. It should be noted, however, that while many of the most popular narratives are made up by their authors, the Qur'aanic and hadeethic stories are all true. They are not made up by Allaah and His Messenger () to convey His message, but are in fact true historical examples of the message. This fact has been emphasized in the Qur'aan in numerous passages. For example, Allaah refers to the Qur'aan as truth:

: وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ ٩

“I revealed the Book to you in truth.” (*Soorah al-Maa'idah* (5):48)

Likewise, Allaah repudiates the idea that these narratives are invented. At the end of the story of Prophet Yousuf (Joseph) and his brothers, He says,

: مَا كَانَ حَدِيثًا يُفْتَرَى وَلَكِنْ تَصْدِيقَ الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ ٩

“It is not an invented story but a confirmation of the previous (scripture). (*Soorah Yoosuf* (12):111)

Consequently, it is not surprising to find that the use of examples from human life to illustrate points in the message is very effective.

Figurative speech is generally a more moving and effective method of communication than direct commands and detailed explanations. Hence, Allaah has also used them frequently in the Qur'aan:

" وَلَقَدْ ضَرَبْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ "

“Certainly I have made all kinds of comparisons (*mathal*) in the Qur'aan for humankind that perhaps they would reflect.” (*Soorah az-Zumar*, 39: 27)

There are also numerous examples in the statements of the Prophet (...) where he relied on the *mathal* to get his message across.⁷

Gradual Progression

Read your progress by analyzing the level of your audience's internal motivation. This is a technique used by motivators to assess where somebody is relative to the point they are

⁷ They are too numerous to begin to list, but just as a tiny sample, refer to the simile of the people who observe the limits set by Allaah and those who do not as people on the upper and lower decks of a ship (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, vol. 3, p. 406, no. 673). See also *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, vol. 1, p. 278, no. 468, for a simile of the believers as a structure whose bricks support each other.

trying to get across and to gradually get the person to agree with their point. By reading the person's body movements one can assess the person's response position and his or her progress according to the scale. At the bottom of the scale is "neglect – indifferent." If you are talking and somebody is ignoring you, it means that they are completely indifferent to what you have to say and to the topic on which you are speaking. This is what is known as a "difficult person", because they just do not care about your point of view. Convincing them is virtually impossible, because they have no interest in what you have to say. They are simply out of your reach. So rather than trying to convince them to agree with you, you have to find something emotional to get them into the discussion. The ten-point scale shows how a person can gradually evolve from being indifferent to being hostile, to being neutral, to being curious, to finally agreeing. You have to take a person based on where they are and gradually get them to a point of agreement. What happens is, for instance, you meet somebody who is very hostile. You know the person is hostile because they continually interrupt you saying, for example, "No, I don't agree with you." Having read their language and assessed their hostile stance, do you then argue back insisting that they have to agree with you? Will such a response produce a positive result or simply degenerate in a shouting argument? You cannot change somebody from feelings of anger and opposition to agreement immediately. In such a circumstance, the method which should be used is called the PAR (Probe, Align, Raise) method. Probe your adversary, meaning, ask them why are they so hostile? Find out the reasons for their hostility. Then align yourself to their level. See the situation through their eyes. Empathize with them. Then try to raise them to a point of neutrality. Say to them, for example, "Would you mind if I tried another point with you? Is that ok? Can I try another point?" "Ok, yes?" Once they respond positively, you have brought them to neutral. So, rather than confronting their negativity with negativity and ending up in a wrestling match, try to think instead how you can get the hostile audience to a neutral point. Neutral is the same as saying, "I'm willing to listen." He may be reserved, but at least he is now listening. The next step is to get them interested and then to get them excited, before they finally agree.

If somebody is fearful, saying, for example, "I'm very afraid of Muslims. You're all terrorists," will you be able to get them to believe in *Tawh^heed* in five minutes? You have to first remove the fear, you have to get them to be willing to listen, then you have to get them interested, then you can finally get them to agree. This process may take days or weeks before you raise the person above their negative feelings and emotions. It is a skill requiring that we read the situations and the people, respond to their needs appropriately. Like a doctor who does not start prescribing medicine for the patient as soon as they step in his office, but, instead he listens patiently to the patient's complaints and assesses their illnesses, which may require further tests, then and only then, does he prescribe the appropriate medicine. We should also have long-term goals, one month, three months, and six months, before expecting people to commit. Human beings have to grow through these emotional stages and levels. Humans cannot, like a light bulb, go on and off immediately. Anger to happiness and back to anger, joy to sadness and back to joy all take time.

Gradual progression can also be seen in the declaration of faith itself. First false gods are negated, then the One True God, Allaah is affirmed. This principle is applicable in many *da'wah* situations. Where, for example, a Christian says that he believes in the

divinity of Jesus because his prayers to Jesus were answered. Logical arguments about Jesus' divinity do not work because he has practical experience which is enough to win his emotional commitment. If we ask him about the prayers of a Hindu to his god of stone being answered, the Christian will agree that the stone god did not answer the Hindu's prayers, he will affirm that it was the true God who did. However, by doing so, he has also cancelled the basis of his argument for the divinity of Jesus and we can then affirm that it was the One True God who answered his prayers and not his imaginary god, Jesus. Gradual progression in Islaamic law is usually illustrated by the gradual prohibition of alcohol. Similarly, if a person drinks alcohol, fornicates and worships idols, we should not try to get him to quit everything all at once. We prioritize and work our way from the most important to the very important and from there to the important.